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CIA WON'T BE ALLOWED TO STUDY FRANK CHURCH PAPERS
BY STEVE GREEN
BOISE, IDAHO

Boise State University has shunned a Reagan administration suggestion that federal officials look for sensitive information in the papers of the late Idaho Sen. Frank Church, a school official said Friday.

Church -- whose Senate Intelligence and Foreign Relations Committees uncovered CIA plots to assassinate Fidel Castro and overthrow the government of Chile -- donated his private papers to Boise State before he died of cancer in April.

University Librarian Tim Brown denied a Newsweek report that the school had flatly denied a CIA request to study Church's documents to ensure national security secrets won't be made public.

"No request came so there was no request refused," Brown said. "No one has shown any sensitive information is there.

"The Newsweek story makes news where there is none, it is substantially inaccurate," he said. "It was never clear that the CIA had much involvement."

The Newsweek story, in the magazine's Dec. 31 issue, said the university balked at the request, and said the CIA and the Reagan Administration are looking for other ways to gain access to the files.

Brown said Steven Garfinkel, director of the Information Security Oversight Office -- an arm of the General Services Administration -- suggested this fall that federal agents review the documents to ensure national security information is not made public.

Brown said he did not know if Garfinkel was acting in behalf of the CIA, and no formal request was made for access to the documents.

The librarian said he told Garfinkel there probably is no sensitive information in Church's documents, which have yet to be cataloged.

And Brown said he told Garfinkel Boise State would protect the confidentiality of sensitive documents, if any are found.

"I haven't heard from him since," he said, adding "I occasionally hear a rumor that the 'CIA' is still interested."

The university could not have allowed federal officials to review the files, even if the school agreed to the suggestion, Brown said.

"It is not my place to say yea or nea, it will not be for a couple of years, if people want to look at the papers it is up to Mrs. (Bethine) Church, who retains the right to give permission to examine the papers," he said.

Brown said he was not aware of any requests from the government to Mrs. Church for permission to look at the documents.

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Brown said Senate Historian Richard Baker also is confident no sensitive information will be found among the estimated two million documents, stored in 1150 boxes.

But if sensitive information is discovered, it will be kept secret, he said.

"It is our desire to comply with law and to respect confidential information," he said.

He said the university is bound by the agreement under which it received the papers not to allow the public access to classified information, if any is found.

Brown also said he has heard the CIA has referred the matter to the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The boxes -- which are secured in a locked room -- contain speeches, correspondence, campaign literature and documents on issues ranging from wilderness to water issues.

The papers will not be cataloged until funds from institutions and individuals are available to finance the job, Brown said.